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CONSUMERS LOOK AT COMMERCIAL CANNED FOODS 1/

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Commercially Canned Foods in the Diet

Reserve

Commercially canned foods have become an increasingly important factor in meal planning, particularly among those homemakers whose time for meal preparation is limited because of out-of-the home employment or other activities. Many housewives are not able to obtain fresh green vegetables at certain times of the year and some are not able to do home canning or have no storage space for keeping foods which they might process. Such persons have to depend largely upon the commercially canned foods in order to give their families the variety of foods needed for health and growth. These canned foods retain high percentages of the vitamin and mineral content of the fresh product and therefore contribute to balanced and varied diets throughout the year.

Present Supplies of Canned Fruits and Vegetables

The War Food Administration has announced that Government requirements for canned vegetables for the armed forces will be higher in 1945, and for canned fruits slightly less, than those in 1944. Beginning January 30, 1945, canners were required to set aside about 61 percent of their estimated production of 13 major fruits and fruit juices and about 48 percent of their estimated total production of 15 major canned vegetables and vegetable juices. The use of more fresh vegetables is encouraged this year, and housewives who are able to do home-canning should plan to can their own fruits and vegetables so that families who, of necessity, are dependent upon commercially canned foods may find ample supplies available.

Grading and Inspection Services

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (War Food Administration) is authorized by Congress to grade and certify canned fruits and vegetables when requested to do so. The authorization also covers the establishment of standards for these products, so that they may be inspected, graded and labeled as to quality if desired. Under the FA program about 70 such standards, which are for permissive use, have already been set.

The amended Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938 authorized certain mandatory standards which represent reasonable minimum requirements for certain commodities. Since 1938 minimum standards have been established for five canned fruits (apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, and fruit cocktail) and two canned vegetables (peas and tomatoes). If these commodities do not meet the requirements under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, they must be labeled "Below Standard in Quality -- Good Food - Not High Grade."

To purchase intelligently, housewives need some means of identifying the quality. The quality of canned foods is often above the minimum requirements set by the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. Grade labeling provides this identification. Only when consumers are sufficiently informed concerning the inspection and grading services of the Federal Government will they be vocal in their demands for labels which give them quality indications and other much-needed information. Any packer may label his products A, B, or C if the product meets Government standards, but only those packing under U. S. continuous factory inspection are permitted to use the U. S. Grade labels:

1/ For use as reference material with "A Suggested 6-Point Program for Consumer Study."

"US Grade A, US Grade B, US Grade C." Grade labeling is a practical way of telling consumers the quality of the canned goods, and it permits an intelligent comparison of price and quality as well as a selection of certain qualities for specific use.

Processed Food Grades and their Use Values

Grade A — Only the finest canned fruits and vegetables are in this grade. The products are carefully selected as to flavor, size, color, degree of maturity, and freedom from blemishes. The fruits are highly colored and ripe and may be packed in extra heavy or light sirup or in water which has been slightly sweetened.

Grade A Canned Vegetables are free from defects and are uniform in size and color, and have a high degree of tenderness and flavor.

Grade B — The products in Grade B are of high quality though not so well selected as to color, size, and maturity as those in Grade A. The fruits are well-developed and may be packed in heavy or light sirup or in water which has been slightly sweetened. Grade B vegetables are not as succulent as those of Grade A, but they are of fine quality.

Grade C — Products in Grade C are of good quality but are not so uniform in color, size, and maturity as those in Grade B. The fruit in Grade C may not be so highly colored or so carefully selected and not so uniformly ripe as those in the higher grades. They may, however, be more nutritious because they are more fully mature than those of higher grades.

Below Grade C in Quality — These foods fail to meet the requirements of Grade C in certain respects but they are wholesome, nutritious, and acceptable. They may be used in pies, soups, stews, or otherwise where attractive appearance is not essential. If canned apricots, cherries, peaches, pears, fruit cocktail, peas, and tomatoes belong to this grade, they must be labeled "Below Standard in Quality — Good Food, Not High Grade." The U.S. Grade A, U.S. Grade B, U.S. C scores are the same as Grades A, B, and C, except that foods labeled "U.S." must be packed under the continuous supervision of a Federal inspector in a plant which meets the standards of sanitation and the health requirements of the Federal Government.

When You Buy Canned Fruits and Vegetables

Buy graded products, if available.

Note the ceiling prices.

Read the labels.

Note the net weight and learn to compute cost per ounce.

Learn to select canned foods according to the use you wish to make of them.

Watch for defective cans. Don't buy cans that bulge at the ends.

Don't buy badly dented or rusted cans if you expect to store them for future use.

Don't buy large-sized cans if some of the food will be wasted, even though the price may be comparably lower than that for small-sized cans.

Don't buy in excess of your needs even though you may have extra ration points.

Home Storage of Commercially Processed Foods

Store cans of food in a cool, dark, and dry place.

Take stock of your stored food occasionally and place the older foods where they will be used first.

Foods canned in glass jars should be kept away from the light.

At the first sign of a bulge or leakage the food should be opened and, if no spoilage has occurred, it should be used immediately.

Do not allow canned foods to freeze.